

HR Weekly Podcast  
02-26-2014

Today is February 26, 2014, and welcome to the HR Weekly Podcast from the State Human Resources Division. This week's topic concerns job descriptions.

According to a January 8, 2014 article by Tammy Binford entitled "Making job descriptions live and breathe, not sit dusty in the files," dated January 8, 2014, on HR Hero, writing a job description can be a daunting task, but it is worth the time because it is an important communication tool that helps an employer articulate the specific tasks, job responsibilities, essential and marginal functions, and required qualifications of a particular job. To create an accurate and effective job description, the employer has to perform a job analysis, understand the competencies and skills required to accomplish needed tasks, understand the outcomes and work environment of a particular job, and understand the employer's needs to produce work.

Ms. Binford quoted Mary Anne Kennedy, principle consultant at MAKHR Consulting, LLC, who stated that a job description is a "living, evolving tool" that should not only include "duties, competencies, responsibilities and required educational credentials, it also needs to integrate the employer's core values so that it communicates to employees the organization's mission and vision." A living, evolving job description helps the employee buy into the job description and accept and maintain behavioral accountability, which spells success for the organization.

Ms. Kennedy pointed out that a vital role of human resources planning is keeping job descriptions current. As such, a job description should be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure it accurately reflects what the employee is doing and that the employee's job is aligned continuously to support the organization's mission and vision. Ms. Kennedy identified four people components that are benefits of job descriptions as they are periodically reviewed and updated. These four components are:

1. Headcount, which looks at the number of people in each job, the supervisor-employee ratio, whether the worker has the right skillset, the likelihood of retirement, why employees leave and where are they going, and what job functions can be consolidated;
2. Succession planning, in which job descriptions can determine which positions feed to other positions through promotion or lateral transfers;
3. Training and development, where job descriptions can determine what kind of training is needed; and
4. Tracking and monitoring, which track what duties are being performed in a rapidly changing market.

In addition, Ms. Binford observed that job descriptions also help employers cover their legal bases as well. When creating or updating a job description, the employer needs to ensure that they are in compliance with certain laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Fair Labor Standards Act's minimum wage and overtime requirements.

If you have a question about this topic, please contact your HR Consultant at 803-896-5300. Thank you.